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UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
4 February 1986

FILE ONLY

ACCUSED SPY ATTRIBUTED PAYOFFS TO "CHINESE LUCK"
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WASHINGTON

If accused spy Larry Wu-Tai Chin collected more than $1 million for passing intelligence information to the Chinese government, as FBI agents allege, he kept his wealth as secret as his clandestine activities.

The veteran CIA analyst lived quietly in an apartment in Alexandria, Va., a Washington suburb, drove a second-hand car and told neighbors his frequent travels stemmed from ''Chinese luck'' at the gambling tables.

Chin's trial begins today in U.S. District Court in Alexandria. He is charged with 17 counts of espionage, conspiracy and tax evasion. If convicted, he faces up to two life terms plus 47 years, and fines of up to $2.5 million.

FBI counterintelligence agents said that Chin, 63, who was born in Peking, received his payoffs through Hong Kong bank accounts or in $50,000 cash on at least one visit to his spy masters in the Chinese capital.

Chin, a naturalized American citizen, allegedly received up to $1 million from Peking over the years for his work as a ''mole'' in the CIA.

He is accused of spying for Peking from as early as 1952, when the United States did not recognize the newly Communist country and when U.S. troops were fighting Chinese ''volunteers'' in Korea, until his arrest last November during a period of warm relations between Peking and Washington.

According to an FBI affidavit, Chin has admitted being recruited during World War II by communist Chinese intelligence agents while he was working as a translator for a U.S. Army liaison mission in China.

Chin later worked in 1950 as a secretary-interpreter at the U.S. Embassy in Hong Kong and interviewed Chinese prisoners of war captured in Korea -- information he allegedly relayed back to Peking.

In 1952, Chin joined the CIA -controlled Foreign Broadcast Information Service in Okinawa, moving on to Santa Rosa, Calif. and then to the service's headquarters in Langley, Va.

The indictment said Chin, who held a high security clearance, made trips to Peking, Hong Kong and Toronto, Canada, to meet with Chinese agents and turn over the classified material for cash.

Chin retired from his $44,000-a-year position with the CIA in 1981 but continued to work as a contract employee until his arrest by FBI agents last November.

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